

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TEHRAN 00362 141233Z

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ACTION SS-25

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INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
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C O N F I D E N H D I A L TEHRAN 0362

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, LE  
SUBJECT: LEBANESE CRISIS

REF:(A) 75 TEHRN 12595,(B 75 TEHRAN 12441,(C) BEIRUT 285

1. IN CONTEXT OF SUGGESTION ADVANCED IN REFTEL (C) AND AT THE RISK OF TELLING ADDRESSEES WHAT IS ALREADY WELL KNOWN, FOLLOWING MAY BE OF SOME RELEVANCE IN CONSIDERING WHETHER IT USEFUL TO URGE THE SHAH TO TAKE A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN THE LEBANES CRISIS.

2. LEBANESE AMBASSADOR AL-KHALIL INVITED DCM TO AN EN FAMILLE LUCH JANUARY 13 TO MEET HIS VISITING FATHER, KAZEM AL-KHALIL. THE ELDER KHALIL COVERED MUCH OF THE SAME GROUND THAT HIS SON HAS COVERED WITH US IN THE PAST AND WHICH HAS ALREADY BEEN REPORTED. HE MADE SEVERAL POINTS, HOWEVER, WHICH MAY BE OF INTEREST. FIRST, HE SAID WITH CONSIDERABLE EMPHASIS THAT IT WOULD BE A GREAT MISTAKE TO VIEW THE LEBANESE CRISIS AS A STRUGGLE BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND CHIRSTIANS. IN FACT, IT WAS A STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE RIGHT AND THE LEFT, WITH THE LATTER RECEIVING GREAT ASSISTANCE FROM OUTSIDE LEFTIST SOURCES. IN THIS CONNECTION KHALIL SAID THAT PRESIDENT FRANGIE HAD TOLD HIM RECENTLY THAT SOVIER SUB-MARINES WERE NOW ESCORTING ARMS SUPPLY SHIPS TO LEBANON. SECONDLY, KHALIL CONFIRMED WHAT HIS SON HAD TOLD US  
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 TEHRAN 00362 141233Z

PREVOIUSLY, THAT HE WAS UNDER GREATPZRESSURE FROM THE

PLO AND SYRIA TO BREAK WITH CHAMOUN SINCE IT WAS OBVIOUSLY IN THESE PARTIES' INTEREST TO ISOLATE CHAMOUN AS COMPLETELY AS POSSIBLE. ON THE SUBJECT OF CHAMOUN, DCM COMMENTED THAT HE HAD GOTTEN THE IMPRESSION THAT CHAMOUN'S INTRANSIGENCE WAS A MAJOR OBSTACLE TO RESOLVING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN VARIOUS LEBANESE FACTIONS. KHALIL RESPONDED THAT THIS WAS PROPAGANDA PUT OUT BY KARAME WHO WAS NOW UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF PALESTINIANS, SYRIANS AND LEBANESE RADICAL LEFTIST ELEMENTS. THE FACT WAS THAT DEMANDS WERE BEING MADE ON CHAMOUN WHICH HE COULD NOT ACCEPT AND STILL EXPECT TO ENJOY THE SUPPORT AND CONFIDENCE OF MODERATES IN EITHER THE CHRISTIAN OR MUSLIM COMMUNITIES, A CONFIDENCE KHALIL ASSERTED CHAMOUN STILL RETAINS. FURTHER, HE ASKED RHETORICALLY, WHO WOULD BENEFIT FROM COMPROMISE, ONLY THE EXTREME LEFT AND OUTSIDERS. ACTUALLY, HE SAID, CHAMOUN WAS PREPARED TO BE FLEXIBLE IF HE COULD DEAL ONLY WITH MODERATES IN BOTH CAMPS AND HAD SOME ASSURANCE THAT WHATEVER COMPROMISE AGREEMENT HE MIGHT REACH WOULD BE HONORED. UNFORTUNATELY, THIS WAS NOT THE CASE BECAUSE THE MODERATES THEMSELVES WERE NO LONGER IN CONTROL OF THE SITUATION AND THEIR FOLLOWERS HAD NOW COME UNDER LEFTIST INFLUENCE.

3. ASKED ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE LEBANESE ARMY AND WHETHER THE POINT MIGHT BE REACHED WHERE IT WOULD STEP IN ON ITS OWN, KHALIL REPLIED THAT HE BELIEVED IT WOULD CONTINUE TO ACT WITHIN THE CONSTITUTION AND FOLLOW THE DIRECTION OF DULY CONSTITUTED AUTHORITY. ALMOST AS AN AFTERTHOUGHT HE ADD, HOWEVER, THAT "THAT IS IF THERE IS NOT A COUP D'ETAT." INsofar AS ACCUSATIONS THAT THE ARMY HAD A CHRISTIAN BIAS WERE CONCERNED, KHALIL SAID THEY DID NOT HOLD WATER AND CITED CHANGES IN THE ARMY'S LEADERSHIP AS EVIDENCE THAT THEY WERE NO LONGER TRUE, IF THEY EVER WERE.

4. ASKED WHETHER HE THOUGHT THE SHAH HAD A USEFUL ROLE TO PLAY, KHALIL RESPONDED THAT HE KNEW THE SHAH HAD TAKEN A VERY ACTIVE INTEREST IN LEBANESE DEVELOPMENTS AND THAT "ONLY LAST WEEK" HE HAD URGED MODERATION AND COMPROMISE ON CHAMOUN THROUGH THE IRANIAN AMBASSADOR IN BEIRUT. TO  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TEHRAN 00362 141233Z

BE REALLY EFFECTIVE, HOWEVER, HE SAID THAT THE SHAH AND ANYBODY ELSE WHO WANTED TO HELP WOULD HAVE TO SOMEHOW PROVIDE CONVINCING REASSURANCE THAT A COMPROMISE ARRANGEMENT WOULD HOLD IN THE FACE OF ATTACKS BY THE REAL LEFT AND OUTSIDE INFLUENCES. HE LEFT THE IMPRESSION THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE THERE WAS MUCH CHANCE OF THIS HAPPENING.

5. COMMENT: AS REFTEL (A) NOTES, THE SHAH SEEMS TO HAVE SOMEWHAT CONFUSED PERCEPTIONS OF THE LEBANESE SITUATION BUT SEEMS CONVINCED, AS DOES KHALIL, THAT IT IS BASICALLY A LEFT-RIGHT RATHER THAN A MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN CONFLICT. WHILE HE SEEMS DISPOSED TO USING HIS POLITICAL INFLUENCE TO HELP GUIDE EVENTS ALONG MODERATE NON-VIOLENT PATHS AND INDEED MAY HAVE ALREADY DONE SO, ACCORDING TO KHALIL, IS DOES NOT APPEAR HE IS PREPARED TO GO ANY FURTHER. IN OTHER WORDS, HE SEES LEBANON DISINTEGRATING BEFORE OUT EYES..HE FEELS IT IS A MATTER FOR REGRET, ANOTHER VICTORY FOR THE COMMUNISTS, AND A BLOW TO THE FREE WORLD, BUT THERE IS LITTLE HE CAN DO ABOUT IT.  
HELMS

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